

# **BoomerANG Project**

Boomers – Aging's Next Generation

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Chairperson Hardy, Committee Members, Audience Members:

I am Michael Marcus, Principal of Consultants for Community Resources and co-consultant to the Boomer\*ANG Project in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

In early 2004 the Office of Aging and Adult Services, the North Penn Community Health Foundation and 7 senior centers came together to discuss the future of aging in Montgomery County Pennsylvania. Montgomery County is a beautiful county northwest of Philadelphia with roughly 800,000 residents. The County holds the cities of Norristown and Pottstown as well as rural and suburban communities.

After letting an RFP and a lengthy and thoughtful consideration process a proposal by Maturity Mark Services and Consultants for Community Resources was chosen.

The first phase of the project is a year long and has three components:

- A commercial quality market study;
- An asset mapping of the organizations, groups, and individuals that might contribute to the future of Montgomery County;
- A visioning process including a visioning conference on May 24 followed by a charette to be held on 3 consecutive days in 3 different parts of the county.

While all the components of the market study are not yet complete we have found a variety of interesting and important things about the county:

- By 2011 36% of Montgomery County will be over 50 years of age;
- By 2011 50% of Montgomery County's households will be headed by someone over 50;
- Every area of the county will experience unprecedented growth, particularly among boomers 55-64 years old and older residents.

To date over 200 people have attended project community meetings known as "Creating Community Connections". During these meetings a variety of issues have been discussed, all of which are expected to be discussed during the Visioning Conference and charettes including: Affordable and appropriate

housing; transportation including more and affordable services in rural and rapidly growing areas of the county and increased traffic on its formerly rural roads; in-home long-term care services; increasing civic engagement opportunities for the increasing population of seniors and Boomers in the County; and increasing and enhancing business opportunities and employment for seniors and Boomers.

While we are not yet clear on the policy issues that may arise as a result of the project we are convinced that senior centers and aging services will not be able to continue to operate in the way they have in the past, for example the idea of the senior center without walls arises regularly in our discussions; as have the idea of multi-partnered arrangements including Ys, Senior Centers, area agencies, schools, etc.

We are also very conscious of the potential opportunities for business as a result of the changes in population. Opportunities in a county such as Montgomery spanning rural, suburban and urban areas include such things as: shuttle services between difficult to reach areas and medical centers in more urban areas; or food markets on wheels. The potential is enormous given the population growth among younger, healthier, more vital 55 to 64 year olds.

This may require that the Federal government and the states begin to [relax the requirements that currently are in place regarding senior centers to allow for growth in ways that are not currently apparent](#). The current requirements are costly and add little value to the overall programs. Restrictions on dues is another issue that works to de-motivate the leadership of centers that might otherwise work to raise money through a variety of sources.

[Policy issues that may evolve from BoomerANG include funding of congregate meals, and alternatives to sustaining the nutrition of older adults; alternatives to engaging the community outside of the traditional top/down fed to state to local senior centers – that translates into the possibility of self-directed activities where at-risk older adults are provided a stipend to buy what they need from whom they want to buy it.](#)

[Thank you very much for your attention, and good luck with your work.](#)